Lovely Strange Dark
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BY AYUKO
STORY 4
Raws kuinni
Translation Jel
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QC Ianu
lovelystrangedark.wordpress.com

Us, you and me

INOUE.
EGUCHI.
OGATA.
THE GRADE IS ON THE BACK.
I'M RETURNING THE ABSTRACT PAINTING ASSIGNMENT.
ART
OKAY, QUIET DOWN EVERYONE.
CHATTER
CHATTER
Ahaha ha!
Oh crap, I got a C!
B+ Kato Eri
B+ Kato Eri
KATO.
flap...
.....
And I worked pretty hard on this, too.
I got a B on that one, and now this one as well.
No one gets it.
Kato Eri
Grade B
Grade B

No, it's probably me who doesn't get it.
The breeze feels nice today.
Windy out.
MAYBE I SHOULD STOP DREAMING.
RIP
RIP
RIP
tocc
RIP
HEY,
STOP IT.
RIP

IT'S SUCH A WASTE TO TEAR IT UP.
THAT'S THE ASSIGNMENT WE GOT BACK TODAY, RIGHT?
Hmm... she's in my class...
Kotohira Ranko
I THOUGHT IT WAS PRETTY NICE.
...I think?
IF YOU'RE GOING TO TEAR IT UP, WHY DON'T YOU GIVE IT TO ME INSTEAD?
...THIS?
YEAH. I LIKE IT.

Before I knew it,
I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.
I was really happy.
The wind had subsided.
I remember it well.
HEY, ERI.
DO YOU WANT TO BE AN ARTIST SOMEDAY?
NO...
REALLY...? THAT'S KINDA SUPRISING.
OH WELL, IF YOU DON'T WANNA SAY, THAT'S FINE.
..NOT THAT, EITHER.
THEN, MAYBE AN ILLUSTRATOR?
HUH.
NOT REALLY.

I wish I could say something like this

I WANT TO BE A MANGA ARTIST.

with pride, confidence, and a little embarrassment

I WANT TO BE A WRITER.

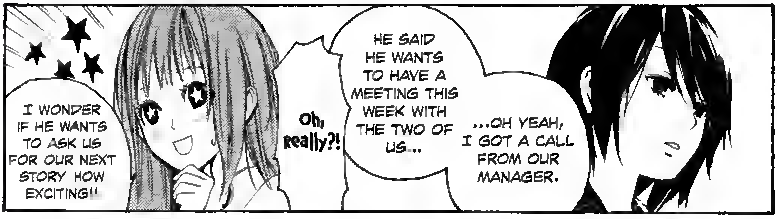
...DON'T TELL ANYONE.

it would be nice if dreams came true.

OH?!
I'LL DEFINITELY READ IT!
YEAH, I WANT TO HEAR YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT IT.
YOU WROTE THIS, RANKO?
HUH?
...
SAY SOMETHING.
HEY, RANKO. .
WHY DON'T WE
CREATE A MANGA TOGETHER?!
SORRY, I BET IT MUST'VE BEEN PAINFUL TO READ.
OH, ARE YOU DONE?
RANKO...

IF IT WORKS OUT WELL, WE COULD EVEN MAKE SOME MONEY!
AND I WOULDN'T MIND IF YOU JUST CAME UP WITH THE CONCEPT.
I JUST THOUGHT THIS WAS INTERESTING,
OH, BUT I WON'T FORCE YOU.
A MANGA...?
HUH...?
IT COULD BE GOOD PRACTICE FOR OUR FUTURE CAREERS!
HOW ABOUT IT?
HEY, DID YOU SEE IT? THIS WEEK'S YOUNG CHAMP.
I DID.
THE NEW MANGA ARTIST IS GOOD.
THE ART KINDA SUCKS, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT IT THAT I KINDA LIKE.
STILL, THE STORY WAS GREAT.
IT REALLY WAS.
WOULD YOU CONSIDER IT SUBCULTURE?
WELL, I GUESS YOU COULD SAY THAT I EXPECT THE MOST FROM THIS MANGA ARTIST OUT OF ALL THE NEWCOMERS
FOR SURE.

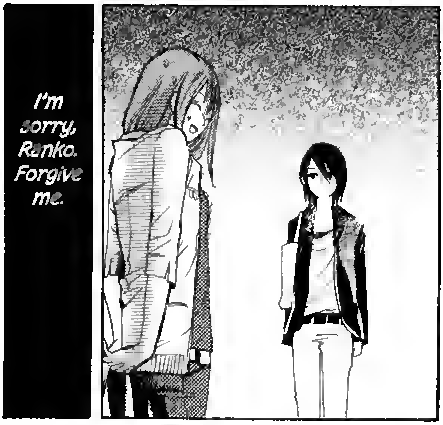
New On
Comics
New On Sale
YONDE
BOOK LE
猫田曜子
Popular Newcomer
5th Floor Rooftop
Elliot Ranko
Paper back Fair
ぴちぴち
Grade C
Grade B
Grade A
And to think I got those bad grades
It hasn't hit me.
time after time
ERI!
Magazine 10
Super hit Popular Series
Yamada Taroko

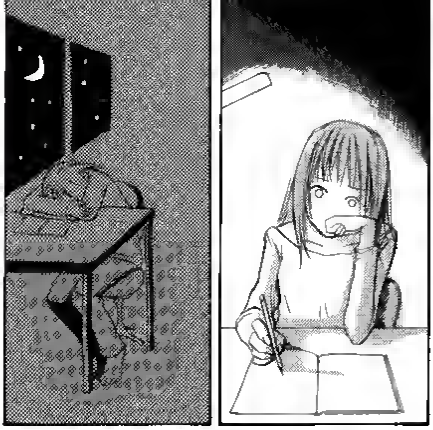

I WONDER IF HE WANTS TO ASK US FOR OUR NEXT STORY HOW EXCITING!!
Oh, really?!
HE SAID HE WANTS TO HAVE A MEETING THIS WEEK WITH THE TWO OF US...
...OH YEAH, I GOT A CALL FROM OUR MANAGER.

I look up to her. I really do.

Of course, I would prefer to continue working with her.

...So I've given it a lot of thought.





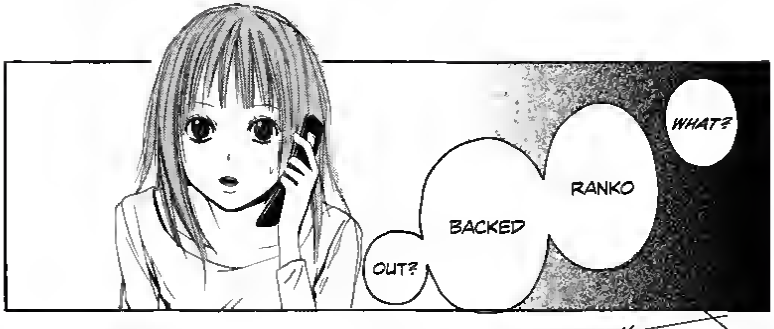
Does she think of me as a burden?

YEAH,
THE ONE-SHOT FROM THE OTHER DAY GOT REALLY GOOD FEEDBACK, TOO.
NEXT TIME LET'S HOPE FOR A HIT. I'LL TREAT YOU GUYS OUT TO YAKINIKU.
HUH?!
A SERIES?!
what?! Really?!
Then even by myself, I could...
That's great... if we could get our name out by starting a series...
ERI...

ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO START ALL THIS?
HUH?
WH..WHY WOULD YOU ASK THAT? OF COURSE I AM.
YOU DON'T WANT TO?
NO, I'M FINE.
BUT IT'D JUST BE A LOT TO HANDLE FOR BOTH OF US.
WELL... OF COURSE IT WOULD BE! WE'LL JUST HAVE TO WORK HARD!
HUH.
THEN THAT'S FINE.
HEY...
COME ON, YOU TWO...
I want to leave.
SO IT'S OKAY IF I GIVE THE GREEN LIGHT FOR NOW?
Right?

At times like that, I'd think that I could manage it alone, without Ranko.

Perhaps it's sad that I think that.



If we were friends, this wouldn't be happening.
No,
I'M LEAVING IT UP TO YOU, OKAY?!
YOU GUYS ARE FRIENDS, AREN'T YOU?
SHE DID! WE'RE IN A BIT OF A PINCH THE DEADLINE FOR THE PLOT WAS THREE DAYS AGO,
BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO REACH HER KATO, DO SOMETHING!
CNAP

Ranko isn't that sort of person.

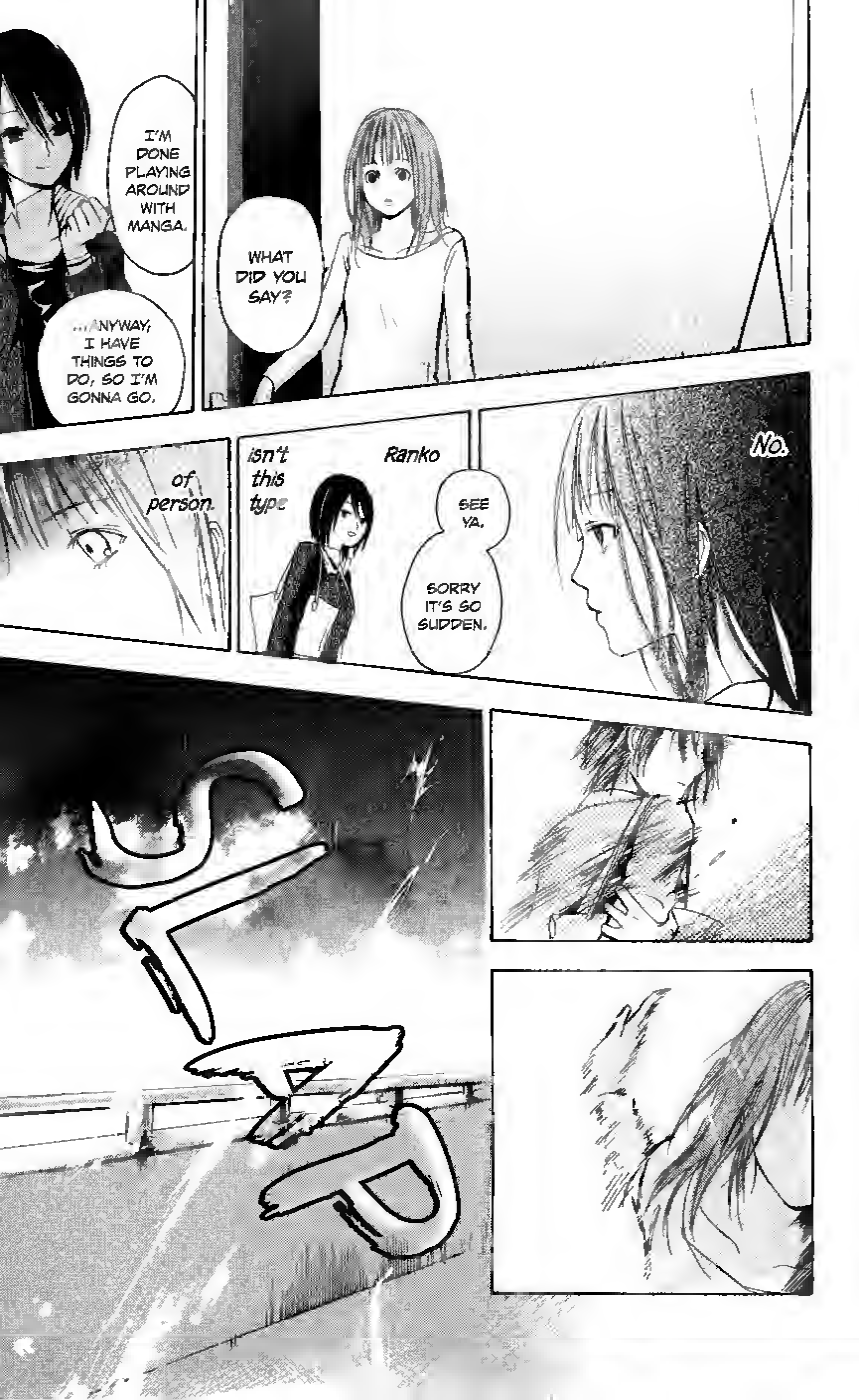
I just know that.

She would never betray me.

There must be some sort of mistake.

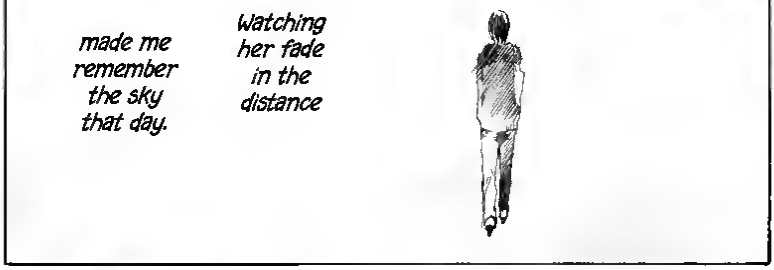
DING-DONG

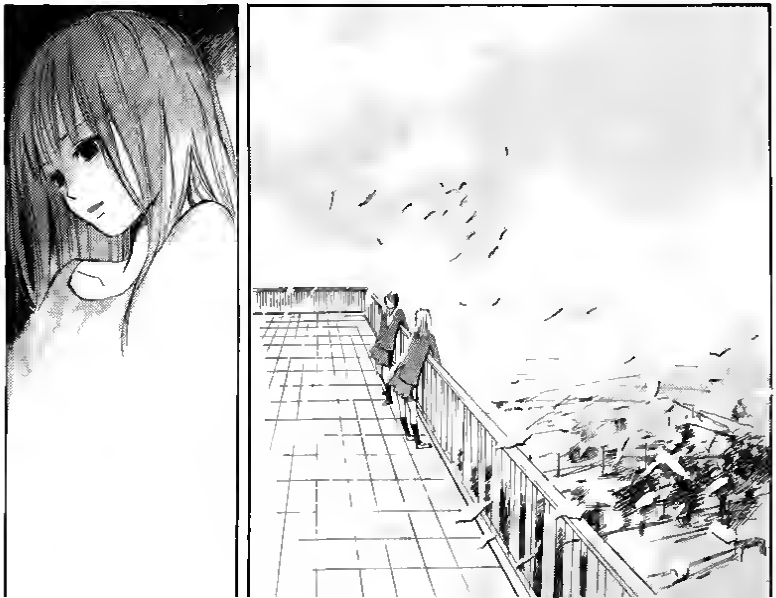
click
I KNEW IT...
JEEZ! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? I'VE BEEN SO WORRIED.
OH YEAH, EARLIER I GOT A CALL FROM OUR MANAGER, AND—
ERI.
I ALREADY QUIT.
YOU'LL HAVE TO GET BY ON YOUR OWN.


I'M DONE PLAYING AROUND WITH MANGA.
...ANYWAY, I HAVE THINGS TO DO, SO I'M GONNA GO.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
No.
Ranko isn't this type of person.
SEE YA.
SORRY IT'S SO SUDDEN.
END

I JUST FIGURED THAT IF WE CONTINUED DOING THIS TOGETHER
ERI.
WE WOULD NEVER SUCCEED.
THAT'S ALL.

I'M LEAVING.


made me remember the sky that day.
Watching her fade in the distance



YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING ME.
I JUST FIGURED THAT IF WE CONTINUED DOING THIS TOGETHER
WE WOULD NEVER SUCCEED.
Right.
Ranko never liked it all along.
It's like she was playing babysitter to me.
Well, sorry.

I'll make you regret breaking up our duo.

I'll write something that you could never write.

Make you wish
talked more,
gone places.
that we could've spent more time together.

One month later...
OH, HELLO. IT'S KATO.
YES.
I MANAGED TO FINISH THE DRAFT.
...YES,
I'LL MAIL IT OFF NOW.
...YES, THANK YOU...
BYE.

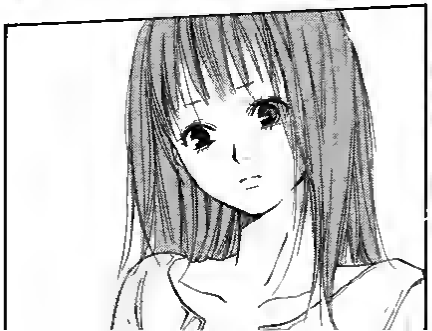
my ideas in a notebook.
I'm glad I wrote down
The Sewer Rat Angel
They let me draw what I wanted.
on my own.
I can do it
DID YOU SEE
THE NEW SERIES THIS WEEK?
Promising Newcomer
"The Sewer Rat Angel" Eliot Ranko
Like a shoujo manga
TO THINK THEY'D MAKE A 180 LIKE THAT, YA KNOW?
I WAS REALLY EXPECTING A LOT FROM THAT AUTHOR.
WAS IT REALLY THE SAME AUTHOR?
The Sewer Rat Angel
Eliot Ranko
SEEMS A BIT OUT OF IT.
HAHA.
I SAW IT.
I WAS DISAP-POINTED.
AH. YOU TOO?

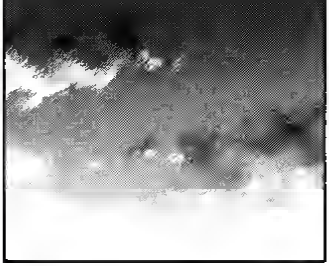
And then
three months passed,
and the series was discontinued.
THE LINE IN THE PARK WAS ABOUT 1KM
THE AUDIENCE WAS OVERJOYED BY THE SWEET, WADDLING PANDA
NOW, MOVING ON TO THE NEXT TOPIC
LONG LINE FOR BABY

THIS AFTERNOON, THE NAOBAYASHI LITERATURE AWARD CEREMONY WILL BE HELD.
THE WINNER THIS YEAR IS THE YOUNGEST RECIPIENT OF THE AWARD TO DATE!
SHE IS CURRENTLY 22 YEARS OLD. A UNIVERSITY STUDENT, AND—
ering in a new era of literature.
Ranko grew out her hair. She's beautiful.

the time for me to cry?

Is now



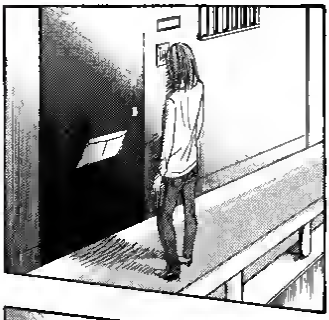


I think that giving up your dreams

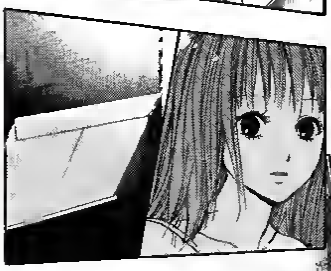
and having your dreams come true

are equally difficult.

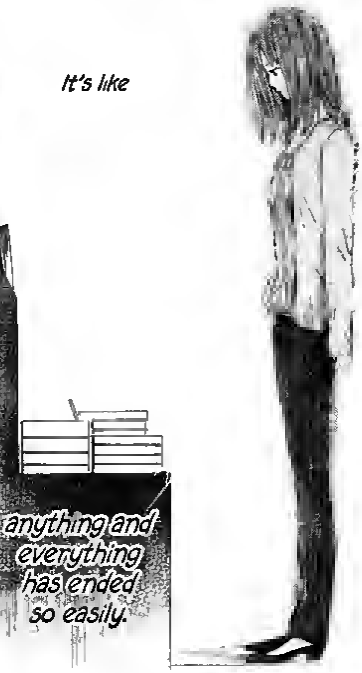
But,



what is this feeling I have right now?



It's like



anything and everything has ended so easily.

I THOUGHT IT WAS PRETTY NICE.
Kato En
B+
I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.

My apologies, Eri.
It's already spring, huh?
Kato Eri B+
I've done something terrible to you.
I won't ask for your forgiveness,
but I think that was the only choice I had at the time.

It's like the confetti that day
Lately the cherry blossoms falling have reminded me of the roof at our high school
You should do what you want to
I didn't think there was any reason to hold you back from what you wanted to draw
How about it?
I really, really want to read more of your manga
It's okay, Ranko.

into reality. *I will make dream job*

《 Fin 》